



SUMMARY OF THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

In accordance with Wisconsin Administrative Code, NR 44 - Master Planning for Department Properties, the Peshtigo River State Forest (PRSF) embarked on a plan to involve the public in the process of developing a revised master plan. From its beginning, steps were taken to ensure opportunities for public involvement throughout the planning process.

The Department developed a Citizen Participation Plan which was available for public review on the internet and in print. This plan describes the legislative standards that guide the planning process, methods of communication between the DNR and public, and how decisions are made.

PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS

People of varied interests and backgrounds participated in Peshtigo River State Forest master planning activities. Some of these "stakeholders" in the future of the Peshtigo River State Forest include resident and non-resident property owners, a waterfront owners association, local and regional elected officials, tribal representatives, motorized recreation groups, non-motorized recreators, hunting and fishing enthusiasts, conservation organizations, equestrian groups, representatives from the timber industry, seasonal visitors, tourism providers, state and federal agencies and various members of the local business community.

In compliance with the Chippewa Treaty rights litigation and the Wisconsin Administrative Code NR 44, the Department of Natural Resources consults with tribal governments during the development of master plans for state lands in the ceded territory. The Department of Natural Resources staff and tribal representatives agreed to the following goal for Wisconsin State Forests: "In consultation with tribal governments, manage the land and other natural resources to provide for the exercise of Chippewa Treaty rights in accordance with applicable law."

For the Peshtigo River State Forest planning process, representatives from the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commis-

sion (GLIFWC) and any other interested tribal members were consulted and invited to comment on all phases of the developing master plan document.

Government-to-government contact was consistently made with local towns and county representatives.

METHODS OF PUBLIC CONTACT AND INVOLVEMENT

Various methods were used to inform the public of the planning process and promoted public involvement throughout the development of the plan. Besides the general public, the Department communicated with local governments, state and federal agencies and tribal contacts. A variety of techniques were used to contact the public, gather information and provide ways for people to participate in the planning process. These communication methods included

- Internet web pages
- Statewide news releases and media interviews
- Direct mailings
- Public meetings and presentations to interested groups
- Personal contact through telephone or written correspondence
- Government-to-government consultations
- Regular newsletters and progress updates

A Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources internet web site was the most comprehensive resource used to facilitate the public involvement plan (<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/forestry/stateforests/SF-Peshtigo/>). The Peshtigo River State Forest web pages presented nearly all documentation produced on the plan. Draft planning documents were posted on the web site as they were made available to the public. Comment

forms were posted on line for people to electronically provide comments during the public comment periods or to email the property manager at anytime.

The following topics were posted on the web site:

Forest Master Plan Overview—This link explains the Department's master planning approach.

Plan Details and Phase—This link describes the general phases and timeline of a master plan. It includes the Vision and Goals for the property and steps to achieve the final plan.

Regional and Property Assessment Document

Preferred Alternative and Options Document

Draft Plan Document

Community Involvement—This link includes a Citizen Participation Plan and opportunities to join the Peshtigo River State Forest mailing or email distribution list, to check the website for informational updates, to contact the Property Superintendent, or to request various forestry assessments and publications.

Upcoming Meetings

Summary and Response to Public Comments

Sign up for Mailing List

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Throughout the planning process, Department staff recorded the public's comments in a computer database. A summary of comments was produced following public review of each phase of master plan development and presented back to the public. The Department's analysis and summary of comments is intended to be qualitative rather than quantitative, although the general level of comment on a topic is noted. The summary of comments describes what was heard collectively and reports that information back to the public.

In developing the new plan, the Department carefully considered the input received from the public, tribal representatives and other governing bodies along with the technical input of the WDNR's interdisciplinary team of scientists. Other considerations include the statutory purpose of a state forest, the vision statement and property goals, information contained in various assessments such as the Biotic Inventory and Regional and Property Assessment and other available data.

ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

In the first step of the master planning process, a broad vision and goals statement was developed for the Peshtigo River State Forest. The vision and goals incorporated public comment gathered through written comment forms (available in hard copy or on-line) and at a public meeting. The vision and goals were developed as part of the Governor Thompson State Park planning in 2002. Issues identified in this early phase of planning for the Peshtigo River State Forest master plan were built into the Preferred Alternative and Options. Issues were further discussed and defined as a part of the public involvement phase of the Preferred Alternative and Options and during development of the Master Plan and Environmental Analysis.



A series of three open-house style public meetings and a public review period were scheduled to provide opportunity for interested or affected parties to review, react, and respond to management proposals.

The following are some of the key issues identified as a result of public input throughout the planning process.

Land management

Public comments generally supported the land management proposals in the Preferred Alternative which include establishing five Native Community Management Areas and three Forest Production Areas. Additional management opportunities that were suggested include wild resource protection, expanded watershed protection, and reforestation.

Recreation

Recreation was the issue that received the most comments throughout the master planning process. No matter what type of recreation a person preferred, it was clear that the public feels the PRSF is an important recreation resource in the area not only for personal enjoyment but as an economic benefit to the region. Many expressed the desire to maintain and/or increase the levels of public access to the forest and water resources. People also voiced an interest in an expanded trail system that would include accommodations for people with physical limitations, horseback riding (and equestrian campground), mountain biking, hiking, and motorized recreation. A few opposed the expansion of Boat Landing 3/ East Bay, stating these areas would generate more use (traffic on roads and water) and in turn affect the quality of visitor experience and degrade the habitat.

Motorized Recreation

Many comments were received in favor of expanding motorized recreational opportunities on the Peshtigo River State Forest. Comments indicated a desire for motorized trail connectors for both ATVs and snowmobiles. The most critical aspect of this issue is linking the north and south sections of the spring/summer/fall ATV trail systems. Stakeholders also commented on the need for trails and connectors to local services such as restaurants, gas stations and lodging, which could impact the local economy. Comments in opposition to motorized recreation focused on the potential for negative environmental effects from vehicles and potential user conflicts. Where proponents saw motorized recreation as a beneficial addition to a multi-use property, opponents often cited the incompatibility with silent sports.

Boundary Expansion

The public is generally supportive of the boundary expansion proposal. The proposal calls for acquiring additional land as it becomes available to promote ecological values and allow for a broader range of regional recreational opportunities. People supporting boundary expansion describe a desire to preserve scenic, undeveloped beauty; to prevent further land parcelization and fragmentation due to development; and to accommodate the many potential uses of the forest.

MASTER PLANNING PUBLICATIONS

Information on a variety of topics was compiled to support the planning process and was made available to the public. These documents are available in paper copy by order request from the Division of Forestry. The web site is a long term repository for master planning documents and the final plan which can be accessed in the future.

Northern State Forest Assessments

DNR scientists and collaborators produced a series of assessments to document their inventory and analysis of the forest. These publications address the following topics: Biodiversity, Monitoring and Evaluation, Socio-Economics for the NHAL State Forest Region, Sustainable Forestry, Environmental Education and Awareness, Recreational Supply and Demand, the 2005 Annual Report on Wisconsin's State Forests and others. Executive summaries of all documents were made available to the public on the internet.

Planning Documents

Working documents were developed with involvement from the public as the master plan's focus narrowed toward completion. For the Peshtigo River State Forest, these included a Citizen Participation Plan, Vision and Goals Statements, Regional and Property Assessment, and the Preferred Alternative and Options, which all led to a Master Plan and Environmental Analysis. Completed documents were made available to the public by request, during public meetings and were posted on the internet. They were also distributed statewide to key public and depository libraries. Maps depicting various management areas and proposals were produced throughout the process as a tool for planners and an aid in informing participants during public meetings. They were also included with documents posted on the Peshtigo River State Forest master planning web site. Table 6.1 Chronological Summary of Public Involvement Activities for the Peshtigo River State Forest Master Plan.

TABLE 6.1 CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES FOR THE PESHTIGO RIVER STATE FOREST MASTER PLAN.

2002-2004	SUMMARY OF EVENTS AND CONTACTS
03/2002	Postcards were mailed to all participants of record explaining the decision to create the initial stages of master plans for both the Peshtigo River State Forest and Governor Thompson State Park concurrently.
08/2002	Two public meetings held introducing the public to the master planning process. Public input received along with the Governor Thompson State Park planning process.
12/19/2002	Comprehensive Planning meeting for town governments - Lake, Porterfield and Middle Inlet. DNR presented an informational presentation on future master planning process with a focus on the Potato Rapids Unit.
04/15-16/2003	Public meetings in Green Bay and Township of Stephenson to discuss the Vision and Goals statements of both the PRSF and Governor Thompson State Park.
07/20-21/2004	Public meetings held in Crivitz and Green Bay to discuss the Master Plan/EA for Governor Thompson State Park. Public comment period held open until July 31, 2004.
09/2004	Governor Thompson State Park Master Plan approved by NRB.
2005	
	The master planning process for both the Governor Thompson State Park and PRSF were started at the same time. Focus was put on the park to finish first and then effort was redirected to the forest. During 2005, data collection and inventories were occurring on the PRSF in support of planning.
2006	
07/2006	Regional and Property Assessment document posted on internet page for public review.
09/15/2006 -11/03/2006	Public comment period for the Preferred Alternative and Options.
10/2006	Public meetings held in Crivitz, Green Bay, and Oshkosh to gather comments on the Preferred Alternative and Options.
12/2006	Response to comments on the Preferred Alternative and Options sent to public mailing list and posted on internet page.
2007	
03/09/2007 – 04/27/2007	Public comment period for Master Plan and Environmental Assessment.
03/20-21/2007	Public meetings held in Green Bay and Stepehenson to gather comments on the Master Plan and Environmental Assessment.
07/2007	Response to comments on the Master Plan comment period sent to public mailing list and posted on internet page.
09/2007	Natural Resource Board Approval of PRSF Master Plan.



